

To help support our troops and their families, this bill provides a much-deserved 3.4 percent military pay increase, as well as \$472.4 million for Family Advocacy programs and full funding for Family Support and Yellow Ribbon to provide support to military families, including quality child care, job training for spouses, and expanded counseling and outreach to families experiencing the separation and stress of war. Additionally, H.R. 3326 provides \$29.2 billion (\$3 billion above the 2009 level) for the Defense Health Program to provide quality medical care for servicemembers and their including \$120 million for Traumatic Brain Injury and Psychological Health Research.

Regarding the Defense Department's operations, I'm pleased that the bill provides \$5 billion to allow defense personnel, not contractors, to perform critical department functions. The Department estimates that every position that is converted from contract to federal civilian saves on average \$44,000 per year. Additionally, the bill reduces contracted advisory and assistance services by \$51 million, and includes general provisions to stop further conversions by the Department of Defense from government functions to contractors. The bill also contains important policy provisions I support, including a bar on the establishment of permanent bases in Iraq or Afghanistan, and the continuation of a general requirement prohibiting the torture of detainees held in U.S. custody.

I am disappointed that we were forced to include in this bill a 60 day extension of three expiring Patriot Act authorities. The very good Patriot Act reform bill reported out of the Judiciary Committee eliminates over-broad surveillance authorities, tightens requirements for the issuance of national security letters, and contains important oversight requirements that will help us protect our people from both potential terrorists and an out-of-control executive branch. That bill should be passed by the House in January 2010 and the Senate should adopt it.

Some non-defense policy items are also attached to this bill, including expanded unemployment benefits, including increased payouts and longer duration of benefits, through February 28, 2010. The bill also extends from nine to 15 months (to February 28, 2010) the 65 percent COBRA health insurance subsidy for individuals who have lost their jobs. The COBRA subsidy extension would help New Jersey families between jobs immediately, as without this subsidy the average New Jersey family would pay \$1,156 a month for COBRA coverage, which would consume over two-thirds of their unemployment benefits.

Overall, this bill meets important national security and domestic policy needs, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.